

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION SESSION, SAN FRANCISCO, 1923.

(A series of brief reports about the convention by members of the California Committee.)

By A. C. REED, Chairman of the Committee

They came early. The first day's registration was the largest in the history of the A. M. A. The total registration was 3765, as compared with the highest registration of 5553 at Chicago in 1918, and a total registration of 2307 in San Francisco in 1915. They stayed late. The hospitality of the California Association did not cease with the close of the convention. It was extended in every county of the State during the ensuing week and was signalized by set post-convention clinics in the larger cities of the State which were fully up to the standard of the convention clinics in San Francisco and Oakland. The enthusiasm and interest aroused by the inauguration of the first California president of the A. M. A., Ray Lyman Wilbur, reached its height on the occasion of his inaugural address before an audience of 7000 persons who packed Dreamland rink on the opening night. And this enthusiasm lasted through the entire convention and was carried back to the physicians of the entire country.

The papers presented will be published in due course. No comment on them is needed now. Certain features of the convention, however, were unique and call for special comment. Every guest felt thoroughly that his hosts were not the physicians of San Francisco but the united medical profession of California. Never before has a State medical society assumed such a role and its success is the best evidence that the idea, while new, is worthwhile. The convention zone included the bay district and in the week following the entire State was visited and every county society undertook its measure of proffered hospitality. Then again a distinct keynote was struck by President Wilbur in his challenge to maintain and keep undimmed the ancient faith of the physician, self-forgetful personal service to the individual and the public. In confident assurance, let the medical profession stand firmly on its achievements and pursue its goal. Let it rightfully assume its leadership in the progress of society, socially, economically, culturally, and healthfully.

The remarkable fitness of the Civic Auditorium for housing such a many-sided convention was abundantly demonstrated. Except for the opening session every feature of the convention, scientific sections, popular theater of lectures and movies, exhibits, and innumerable minor interests found adequate space and facilities in this huge building. The main floor was covered with a commercial and scientific exhibit which in number of exhibits, excellence, and expense has never been exceeded at any medical convention.

A particular feature of the convention was the provision of a program of outdoor sports and entertainment which was fully embraced by the visitors. Thus far not one complaint has been received of lack of entertainment or of imperfect arrangements. Every feature of the great convention moved along smoothly as a well-oiled machine. Every section was provided for adequately, every need foreseen. There was neither hitch nor accident to mar the efficiency and comfort of the visitors.

Highlights of the Convention

The Diagnostic Clinics—For the first time in the history of the A. M. A. set clinics formed a valuable and integral part of the program presented. These clinics were organized for the two days preceding the convention in some twenty hospitals. Each clinic was conducted by visiting and local physicians alternating. They were restricted closely to diagnostic presentations. They drew a large attendance and proved of such value that their continuance is assured in future years.

Publicity—Seldom has a medical convention been so accurately and extensively reported in the newspaper press as this one. It afforded an unusual opportunity for taking the public into the confidence of the medical profession. And this opportunity was excellently improved. The publicity was made possible primarily by organization and the cordial co-operation of the San Francisco newspapers. It was most valuable for the cause of scientific medicine in obtaining for itself a sympathetic hearing from the public. It was also, and will continue to be, most beneficial to the public in giving a clearer idea of the aims and achievements of medicine.

Excellence of Local Arrangements—For the first time the entire A. M. A. was enabled to hold all of its various department committee and section meetings under one roof with no crowding or confusion and with the great inspiration and time saving incidental to effective centralization. The huge floor of the auditorium which housed the scientific and commercial exhibits gave abundant space for a general lounge and headquarters. This could be visited between section meetings without loss of time and the ability to meet friends and strangers was thereby greatly increased. While the city of San Francisco united in offering its hospitality to the A. M. A., it was noteworthy and unique that the entire bay district shared the responsibility of local entertainment and the entire California Medical Association acted as host to the convention.

Post-Convention Clinics—While the convention clinics were limited to the hospitals of the bay district, similar clinics were organized and conducted with equal success in the cities and larger towns of California outside of the San Francisco district on the first two days of the following week. These post-convention diagnostic clinics served to increase the friends of the convention and to make the hospitality of the California Medical Association very real to the visitors from outside the State. The co-operation of the medical departments of the various Federal Government services contributed materially to the success of the sessions.

The President's Reception—Seldom has Nob Hill seen a more brilliant social galaxy than thronged the huge balconies of the Fairmount hotel on the evening of the reception to the incoming President, Wilbur. Over six thousand persons joined to pay honor to the first Western president of the A. M. A.

Emphasis on Preventive Medicine—In the various sections and general meetings emphasis was placed on the importance of preservation of health as a means toward disease prevention. This was stressed both from the standpoint of the individual and from the collective standpoint of society. The excellent newspaper health service being maintained by California physicians attracted much attention and favorable comment. This has proved an effective way of popular education in matters of health.

By ROBERT POLLOCK, San Diego

As the American Medical Association convention draws to its close and the thousands of physicians, surgeons, professors, and specialist of all kinds scatter to their homes in every part of the land, or proceed to spend a well-earned vacation enjoying the scenic beauties of the West, it is pertinent to make certain inquiries as to the results of such a gathering.

Does the expenditure of millions of dollars on the part of those attending the sessions justify itself, in their opinion, and what are the benefits accruing to the public at large in the city in which the convention is held, in the communities to which the delegates return and throughout the length and breadth of the country to which the strong arms

of the press carry liberal messages of the sayings and doings of the week?

Press Praised

Too much cannot be said in praise of the manner in which the newspapers of San Francisco have caught the spirit of the convention and reflected it in their pages. The silent, unobtrusive work of the small army of reporters who have covered the various sections, picking out their salient features for the benefit of their readers, was to the onlooker a marvel of organized efficiency.

It may well be asked since service is the keynote of the convention which has attracted so many thousands of physicians and induced them to leave their practices, is it fair to withdraw at one time so many of the workers from those in need of their services? The answer to this question only emphasizes the magnitude of organized medicine when we say that less than five per cent of its numerical strength is represented here this week, and the better organized the profession has become the easier is it for its members to take over on short notice the work of one another; so that the absence from the home of these delegates fails to disturb, to any appreciable extent, the service program whence they came.

Better Service

This program on their return is promptly given an impetus to better service, which more than justifies their absence. The fruit of the convention is expressed by them in not only increased knowledge, but the inspiration to do better work, both of which newly acquired assets are disseminated throughout the local medical society and the local community generally.

It is well recognized by those who have made a careful survey of the subject that those communities enjoy a higher grade of service wherein its medical profession shares the advantages of a medical society, in which to exchange views on the problems common to the locality, a medical library with which to keep abreast of the newer knowledge and a clinic or hospital to furnish the workshop wherein the physician can best express himself.

So well is it recognized that the physician, no matter how well educated, is apt to lag behind when compelled to work, isolated from his fellows and devoid of these advantages, that it is becoming more and more difficult to induce well-trained young men to settle in the rural districts. In fact, this is one of the large medical problems of the day. All honor to the country physician who, without these advantages, can make of himself the strong, capable, self-reliant exponent of medicine that so many of them have become.

Record Circulated

Supplementing the educational work done by those who attend the meetings of the American Medical Association, that body publishes a full account of all its transactions, including every paper read before its sections, with a complete report of all the discussion of them. This goes back to its membership everywhere in the pages of its weekly journal, which is today the most comprehensive weekly publication on the medical sciences in the civilized world.

Other Results

Besides carrying the transactions of the annual scientific meeting, it also prints letters from and answers questions by its members, carries several pages of well digested editorial matter, written by experts and reflecting the proven knowledge on the most advanced thought of the day. Its abstracting, translating, and interpreting of much of the literature published in other journals, domestic and foreign, carries to the isolated reader some of the advantages of a medical library.

Thus the educative value of the annual meeting teaches its members everywhere and lasts through-

out the year, because it takes the greater part of the year to publish all the transactions in the journal.

It is not difficult to see how this machine for the dissemination of useful medical knowledge is of value to the public everywhere, because it is upon this public that the physician finally expresses the fruits of the convention as they have touched him.

New Sentiment

That there is an aroused public sentiment for civic betterment along the lines of public health, hygienic measures, and means for the prevention of epidemics in the immediate community, wherein such a convention is held, has frequently been commented upon, and certainly San Francisco is entitled in generous measure to all of these rewards for the splendid manner in which she has greeted and cared for her visitors.

Also the city and the State of California are to be congratulated on having in the League for the Conservation of the Public Health a medium through which the scientific truths brought forth from the convention are translated into terms of its practical application to the every day needs of the public. Such matter, written by experts in their individual lines, appears regularly in the pages of the leading newspapers. Educational programs of this kind go a long way to conserving the health of the people, which is the prime function of organized medicine.

By HARRY LESLIE LANGNECKER

The San Francisco meeting has been a tremendous success. The Pacific Coast has been treated to medical demonstrations and ideas beneficial not only to the medical profession but also to other citizens of this community.

The convention clinics ushered in by the State Association were an outstanding feature of this gathering; stimulating members of our local profession and acquainting the visitors with our hospital facilities. It was noticeable that physicians of national prominence in special fields were selected to give these clinics. The attendance and interest shown were ample evidence of the wise arrangement, and the effect will be far reaching and beneficial, perhaps more so than the sectional meetings or the excellent scientific exhibits.

At the section meetings, papers were presented on the live, present-day problems confronting the medical profession. In the orthopedic section it was noted that the discussions were confined to subjects of greatest concern, not only to the orthopedist but also those confronting the general practitioner.

In a word, the educational influence produced by this meeting of the American Medical Association of San Francisco has been well worth while.

By CLEMENT H. ARNOLD, San Francisco

Obiter dicto in re Seventy-fourth A. M. A. Convention.

Several hundred years ago, Terence expressed his creed by the words, "Nihil homini alienum est puto mihi" (nothing which appertains to humanity is foreign to my purpose). It would be difficult, indeed, to conceive of a succinct quotation which would convey more nearly and more cogently the spirit which dominated the seventy-fourth annual convention of the American Medical Association than the above.

From the first meeting of the Council of the California Medical Association to the last section Assembly on Public Health of the A. M. A., this note was the dominant one. A mere casual survey of the multitudinous exhibits in the vast auditorium of the Civic Center, the moving pictures and the publications forced in upon everyone the

indisputable fact that the science of medicine and its allied activities had begun a hegira from out the realm of mere research and scientific experimentation to the broader fields of human life and activity and that its beneficent tenderings were being vouchsafed for the betterment of every phase of human life and endeavor.

Within the more intimate intellectual purloins, so to speak, of the society was plainly evident the spirit of what might be termed, reconstructive unrest. The realization that the profession had its feet upon the threshold of a new era which was about to initiate a more complete and more perfect period of service.

Ray Lyman Wilbur in his inaugural address expressed forcibly what has been long neglected or disregarded that the sins of medicine were those of omission, not of commission, and that only a careful critical analysis from within could be of any real lasting benefit for the improvement of the profession.

The meetings in regard to narcotics and their attendant evils were to the point, well taken and some constructive suggestions offered. The meetings in regard to the question of alcohol were to my mind without a single redeeming feature. The speakers missing the point completely that at the present state of so-called medical legislation any endeavor to alter existing laws are abortive and impractical, especially the suggestions that alcoholic beverages be delivered in undetermined quantities to the physician; and one of the federal directors replied with well-merited sarcasm when he referred to the number of medical men who had renewed their hundred-blank books every three months since the passage of the law. This last was the only discordant note in the whole convention, and it is to be hoped that the saner outlook of the leaders of the society will be able to dominate the situation in the end.

Again and again, mention was made of the "good old family doctor," and his attitude of physician, priest, and counselor to his patients. It seems germane to reflect here a bit upon this statement:

From the earliest days when mankind became gregarious, from the time when mutual help was at all recognized as the *sine qua non* for the preservation of the species, the priest, medicine man, or what-you-will ministered to the ills of the flesh as well as those of the soul. There is no more powerful agency for the guidance and control of man in the universe than such a combination. In the middle ages, when the priesthood were the only real potent agency controlling an unlettered, turbulent population, this was made use of to its fullest extent.

As the "world rolled on, and the hot lands heaved amain," the increasing multifariousness of life inexorably predicated a change along lines we now call specialization. De facto and de jure, the priesthood and the medical profession became more and more distinct until they finally were working along lines which, though they appeared at times antithetical, were really parallel.

This condition lasted, as such, practically unchanged in its larger aspects until about fifty years ago. There had come into existence the old family physician who was generally competent to treat disease as far as medical science then permitted, but who above all possessed a rare tenderness of outlook, a finesse of tact and a warmth of intimacy which separated him only very slightly from the patient's spiritual adviser.

With almost comet-like suddenness there flashed into the crepuscular sky of scientific medicine the large number of discoveries which have made the medical sciences what they are today. Immediately the need for longer study, more intensive study

and the addition of innumerable facts to the existing storehouse of knowledge brought into being specialization.

Specialization predicated less time to patients and more time to their bodies and their particular diseases. The movement once initiated progresses, *pari passu*, with the other advances in human activities. Gradually, to a certain extent the patient's personality was lost sight of by some physicians. It was forgotten that "back of every set of symptoms lies a soul," and some who came to their physicians with the unuttered but nevertheless painfully present Macbethian plaint, "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, Raze out the written troubles of the brain, And with some sweet oblivious antidote Cleans the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff That weighs upon the heart?"

were met by one who was by training and, sometimes, too, by inclination, totally unfit to handle such a situation.

It is not difficult, then, to see whence came the numbers and the strength of the cults which have arisen and which in one way or another minister to the patient's unsatisfied and untutored emotionalism. The medical profession, then, like the medieval guilds, while open to suggestions from without, should govern themselves from within.

The fires of social assay are even now raging, many of our dearest edifices have been consumed or scorched, it is in the hands of the profession itself whether it shall stand or fall with the others. There is no greater agency for progress than medicine, but it must be honest medicine, searching, testing, proving with its ideal the inscription upon Trudeau's statue at Saranac: "Guerir quelquefois, Soulager Souvent, Consoler toujours" (curing sometimes, relieving often, consoling always). If some of our institutions of science have crumbled in the light of present day progress we may, as Tennyson has said, "rise upon the stepping stones of our dead selves to better things," for the betterment of mankind, the glory of our profession and the honor of our illustrious forbears who by their perennial labor and self-sacrifice made life the possibility it is today.

Age Incidence of Gastric Cancer—Occupation, family traits, habits, mode of living, onset of complaint; in short, that fine network of circumstance with which cancer is usually associated, Meyer Golob, New York (Journal A. M. A., May 5, 1923), asserts, has a greater significance than age. When the patient is of an age not within what might be termed the frequency period—the so-called "cancer age"—physicians have manifested a very human failing by their reluctance to ascribe the patient's condition to so horrible a disease as cancer, and naturally cast about for a milder malady. Symptoms warranting a diagnosis of chronic gastritis, particularly in patients who claimed the enjoyment of good health prior to the onset, favor a suspicion of cancer. When a diagnosis of carcinoma ventriculi is established in a case in which there is no palpable mass, it is not safe to assume from the absence of such a mass that the disease is in an early stage, for a large growth that has well metastasized may exist without producing a palpable tumor. It is the prediagnostic phase of cancer that should be detected—a phase often disregarded because of the absence of impressive signs or symptoms, as when neither the cardiac nor the pyloric orifice is involved, when there is no hesitation in food entrance and no obstruction to food exit. A suggestive symptomatology, no matter how faint the indication, calls for a searching inquiry. The easier it is to diagnose a cancer, the harder it is to operate on it.